

Abe's image and other trivia: It's coin quiz time

By Roger Boye

Even the novice should score at least six correct on our biannual coin quiz. As usual, answers are at the end.

1. True or false: Abe Lincoln's image appears on both sides of U.S. cents minted since 1959.

2. The tails side of a Roosevelt dime depicts a torch surrounded by olive and oak branches. What do they symbolize?

3. Why do some collectors dub coins with minting errors "fidos"?

4. In the 1870s, Uncle Sam issued 20-cent pieces in a four-year experiment that flopped. Why were such odd-denomination coins deemed necessary? [a] to help relieve a coin shortage in the West; [b] to better fill out the decimal-based coinage system; [c] to discourage the use of Spanish coins still circulating; or [d] all of those.

5. True or false: A Caucasian served as the artist's model for the Indian on the famous Indian-head cent.

6. Name the only regular-issue U.S. coin that commemorates peace.

7. A coin made of 12-karat gold contains [a] 12 percent gold; [b] equal parts of gold, silver and copper; [c] 50 percent gold; [d] pure gold.

8. Why do bureaucrats make some coins, such as the cent and nickel, with plain edges and others with grooved edges?

9. In 1838, the government opened branch mints at Charlotte, N.C., and Dahlonega, Ga., to [a] help the local economies; [b] placate influential senators; [c] relieve a serious coin shortage; or [d] mint gold discovered in the Appalachian Mountains.

10. To a collector, "mules" are [a] difficult-to-find rare coins; [b] stubborn hobbyists; or [c] coins or tokens that shouldn't exist.

Answers:

1. True. On the reverse, the statue of Lincoln is faintly visible within the Lincoln Memorial.

2. Liberty [torch] through peace [olive branch] and strength [oak branch].

3. The word is an acronym for "freaks, imperfections, defects and oddities."

4. D. But people refused to use the coins because they closely resembled quarters.

5. True. Hobby lore suggests the model was the daughter of the coin's designer.

6. The crowned-Liberty silver dollar minted in 1921 to celebrate the end of World War I.

7. C. Pure gold is 24 karat.

8. The grooves are a throwback to eras when circulating coins contained silver and gold. The grooves discouraged people from shaving precious metal coins and then trying to spend them.

9. D.

10. C. An example is a coin made from two dies not meant to be used together, as a piece showing the heads-side design of a Jefferson nickel and the tails-side design of a Roosevelt dime.